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Reply to Office Action of October 31, 2006  
Response Dated December 11, 2006

#### LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1, 40, and 47 are amended herein. Claims 2-16 and 20-32 were previously canceled. All amendments are made without prejudice. Please note that all claims currently pending and under consideration in the referenced application are shown below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

#### Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:  
at least one metal base portion in the form of a plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides;  
at least one blade attached to and extending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal base portion and exposing at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade;  
a covering disposed at least partially over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and at least partially covering said perimeter sides of said at least one metal base portion; and  
a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said covering, said layer of adhesive structured for ~~permanently~~ fixedly

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attaching said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering such that said covering translates pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade.

Claims 2-16 (canceled)

17. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering is comprised of plastic.

18. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus for adapting said at least one blade for use with an existing die cutting press.

19. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering extends substantially over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and substantially along at least a portion of said perimeter sides said at least one metal base portion.

Claims 20-32 (canceled)

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33. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a release pad attached to said top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

34. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 33, wherein said release pad has a thickness approximately equal to a height of said at least one blade above the top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

35. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 33, wherein said release pad is comprised of at least one of neoprene or foam rubber that is compressible to expose the at least one cutting edge of said at least one blade when the release pad is pressed against a material to be cut.

36. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said at least one metal base portion and said at least one blade are separate components that are welded together to form a cutting die.

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37. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said at least one metal base portion and said at least one blade are integrally formed to form a cutting die.

38. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 37, wherein said cutting die is an etched die.

39. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 37, wherein said cutting die is a cast die.

40. (currently amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:  
a metal plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides;  
at least one metal blade depending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal plate, said at least one metal blade having an exposed cutting edge for cutting into a medium in sheet form;  
a housing disposed over said back surface of said metal plate and at least partially covering said perimeter sides of said metal plate; and  
a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said housing, said layer of adhesive structured for ~~permanently~~ fixedly attaching said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said housing

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such that said housing translates pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the exposed cutting edge.

41. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said metal plate and at least one metal blade are integrally formed.

42. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing is comprised of a softer material than said metal plate to allow penetration of small protrusions in said back surface of said metal plate.

43. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing is comprised of a softer material than said metal plate to substantially uniformly distribute a force being applied to said housing to said back surface of said metal plate.

44. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 43, wherein said housing is comprised of molded plastic and configured with a recess that substantially matches the perimeter sides of the metal plate.

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45. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus to allow the metal plate and at least one metal blade to be used in an existing pressing device.

46. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 45, wherein said housing is an adapter having a predetermined thickness to adapt said metal plate for use with an existing pressing device.

47. (currently amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:  
at least one metal base portion in the form of a plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides and defining at least one channel therein;  
at least one blade positioned within said at least one channel and extending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal base portion and exposing at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade, said at least one blade bonded to said at least one metal base portion;  
a covering disposed over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and substantially covering said perimeter sides of said at least one metal base portion;  
and  
a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said covering, said layer of adhesive structured for ~~permanently~~ fixedly

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attaching said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering such that said covering translates pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade.

48. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein said covering is comprised of plastic.

49. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein said covering increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus for adapting the at least one metal base portion to be used with an existing die cutting press.

50. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein said covering is attached to said at least one metal base portion with an adhesive.

51. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, further comprising a release pad attached to said top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

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52. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 51, wherein said release pad has a thickness approximately equal to a height of said at least one blade above the top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

53. (previously presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 51, wherein said release pad is comprised of at least one of neoprene or foam rubber that is compressible to expose the at least one cutting edge of said at least one blade when the release pad is pressed against a material to be cut.